

News Release



Controller of the State of California - Kathleen Connell

300 Capitol Mall, Suite 1850
Sacramento, California 95814

Contact: Byron Tucker (310) 342-5678

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTROLLER'S EDUCATION PLAN TEAMS COMMUNITY COLLEGES WITH HIGH-TECH PLAYERS

Fresno City College Selected for New Public-Private Partnership

FRESNO, May 6 -- Uniting community colleges with major players in California's technology-based emerging industries is the goal of a new education program launched by State Controller Kathleen Connell today at Fresno City College. The self-sustaining program will utilize existing resources by linking local high-tech companies with nearby community colleges in an effort to better train students and stimulate economic growth.

"Our community colleges are an untapped resource for training Californians to participate in the state's new high-tech-based economy," said Connell, California's Chief Financial Officer. "It is only natural to pair our 106 community colleges with private-sector 'mentors' -- utilizing the infrastructure already in place."

The pilot program calls for five community colleges to partner with companies in what Connell has termed "emerging industries" -- high-tech communications, computer-aided fashion design, new media, international trade and biosciences. Businesses named to the program's statewide advisory board will act as an industry bridge to the community colleges by bringing first-hand industry knowledge into classrooms; offering on-site internships for students *and* teachers; supplying support and technical expertise to develop targeted curricula and loaning state-of-the-art equipment to schools for training.

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Connell's High-Tech College Program/2-2-2

Industry executives and government officials named to the program's statewide advisory board, and whose companies will work specifically with Fresno City College on a program focusing on international trade include Fresno's: Robert Cardinal, Chairman of the Board of *Benefit Administration Corp.*; Richard Matoian, President, *California Grape and Tree Fruit League*; John Riddering, Chairman of *California International Development Co.* and President, *Irriconsult International* and Paul Konynenburg of *Britton Van Konynenburg Partners*.

"I've met with CEOs from across the state. Their number one concern isn't taxes or even regulation -- it's the quality of the labor force," said Connell. "Many businesses are suffering because California's education system is failing to produce the high-tech workers they need. If we're unable to meet the challenge presented by knowledge-based industries, there is a risk that high-tech California companies may choose to invest their dollars out of state."

"The potential of international trade is enormous and the need for experienced future trades is critical," said Riddering. "State Controller Connell's program would fill the growing need and provide important economic benefits for the entire Central Valley." Cardinal added: "Export is the key ingredient of our current economy and is destined to be an even larger factor in the future both for this area and for our young people. A better trained and educated work force improves the economic base for all of us."

Connell's program will be supported by legislation she is proposing that is being carried by Assemblymember Ted Lempert (D-Palo Alto). The bill, AB 1149, will offer tax credits to companies that invest in California's colleges by donating the types of equipment used in the workplace, and by helping to fund campus facilities that mirror their own.

"The community colleges don't have the resources right now to purchase the equipment themselves," said Connell. "The passage of this bill will go a long way toward helping students compete, without spending general fund dollars."

Fresno City College is one of five schools named to the pilot program. Santa Monica College, City College of San Francisco, San Diego City College and Mission College in Santa Clara were announced earlier this month -- each focusing on a different emerging industry.